



"As a first sergeant, you get to impact everybody, sometimes as a mentor, a guidance counselor, a parent."

Master Sgt. Kristy Walker
First Sergeant
 319th Training Squadron
 Lackland Air Force Base, Texas
 Years in the Air Force: 18
 Hometown: Hampton Roads, Va.
 Number of first sergeants: 1,270

Taking Care of Business

As a medic, Master Sgt. Kristy Walker is used to helping people. But it wasn't until two years ago, when she decided to volunteer for another duty that she truly realized what helping people was all about.

For 18 years, Sergeant Walker has been wearing blue. But as a "proclaimed" Air Force brat, the service has been in her blood her entire life.

"I originally joined to get money for school, but the Air Force family has always been a part of my life," she said.

It was natural then that after so many years in the military, Sergeant Walker wanted to take on a time-honored traditional role, rich in military customs — that of a first sergeant.

"It just seemed like a logical extension of what I do as a medic," Sergeant Walker said. "To help people and make a difference. Only now I get to deal with the health, welfare and morale of many troops."

As the "First Shirt" for the 319th Training Squadron at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, Sergeant Walker is not an ordinary first sergeant. There, she gets to take care of more than 500 troops, 24

hours a day, seven days a week. Instead of letting that staggering figure overwhelm her, Sergeant Walker finds her special duty assignment "the most rewarding" job she's had so far.

"It's amazing to have a troop walk up to you and say, 'I remember you. You helped me,'" she said. "Being a first sergeant is like volunteer work, you get something back as well, but the Air Force pays you for it."

Dedicated. Personable. Professional. These are some of the traits Sergeant Walker believes a first sergeant must have. Many people would agree that these are traits found in most bluesuiters as well. But Sergeant Walker knows it takes a special person to step up to the challenge.

"I look for individuals who are involved with the troops and can see the big picture of their unit. If someone can be a good supervisor, then they can be a good first sergeant," she said.

With only one year left in her role as a first shirt, Sergeant Walker feels she will have touched many lives and even, hopefully, made an impact on them.

— by Capt. Christine L. Avery, photo by Tech. Sgt. Cecilio M. Ricardo Jr.